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ABSTRACT

In November 1979 the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) published a list of assumptions about the business environment within which college and university administrators would operate during the 1980's. The assumptions were divided into two categories: general external economic assumptions, and those that would have some impact on business officers in colleges and universities at all levels. This study examined the extent to which a selected group of 21 housing officers agreed or disagreed with the assumptions. The response rate was 100 percent due to followup efforts. Measures of central tendency were calculated for each item of the survey. Respondents agreed with all of the assumptions presented to them except one concerning federal aid. They did not believe student aid would increase or that additional federal support would grow at a rate slightly under the inflation rate. Recommendations for housing practices derived from these results are: (1) devise ways to assure accountability to various constituencies to insure internal and external confidence; (2) develop management tools and automatic data processing techniques current with present technology; and (3) prepare to provide more services at lower cost. The lists of assumptions, data results, and a list of participants are appended. (Author/MSE)

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The Business Environment for Housing Officers: Assumptions for the 1980's

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Introduction

In November, 1979, the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) published a list of assumptions about the business environment within which college and university administrators would operate during the 1980's. The list of assumptions was broken into two categories. One of the categories included general external economic assumptions while the other category was comprised of assumptions that would have some impact on business officers of colleges and universities at all levels.

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which a selected group of housing officers agreed or disagreed with NACUBO's assumptions. As was the case with the assumptions published in 1979, two categories of assumptions were presented to the housing officers and they indicated the degree to which the agreed or disagreed with each assumption.

Method

Sample

Twenty-one chief housing officers comprised the sample for this study. They were invited to participate in the study based on several factors including the characteristics of the institution they served, their experience with business-related matters and geography. The participants in the study are listed in Appendix A. Ten of the participants served private institutions, while the balance were employed at public institutions. Seven of the participants worked at institutions with a housing capacity smaller than 2,000 students. Five served institutions with a housing capacity ranging from 2,001 to 4000, while the balance were located at institutions housing 4,001 or more students.

Instrumentation

The assumptions used for this survey were developed by the National Association of College and University Business Officers. They were published in 1979 and sought to list a number of assumptions for the business environment that business officers would encounter during the decade of the 1980's. The assumptions were reproduced verbatim.

On the instrument, the respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with the assumption using a modified Likert-type scale. Potential responses ranged from "strongly agree with the assumption" to "strongly disagree with the assumption." Respondents were asked to place a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 next to the assumption to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with it.

Data Collection

A letter was sent to each of the respondents in early 1982 inviting their participation in the project. The letter indicated that during

Spring they would be receiving the instrument and that their participation was critical to the success of the project. The questionnaire was sent to the respondents in Spring, 1982. Telephone calls were placed to those individuals who did not respond within a reasonable period of time. Ultimately, all 21 individuals included in the sample completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 100%.

Data Analysis

Measures of central tendency were calculated on an item by item basis for the entire sample. Included in the measures of central tendency were such statistics as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and variance for each item.

To calculate if significant differences existed between certain subgroups of the sample, the analysis of variance procedure was employed. Mean scores of housing officers from public institutions were compared with those from private institutions, and mean scores on the basis of institutional size also were compared. The level of significance selected was .05. Where a significant difference was determined, a post hoc Scheffe procedure was utilized.

Results

General Business Environment

The respondents tended to agree with the assumptions about the general business environment. Items which attracted the strongest agreement were those which dealt with the expanded use of the computer as a management tool, continuing pressure to develop better management tools, and continuing pressure by government for improved accountability. On the other hand, the participants tended to disagree with the assumption that federal aid will continue to grow at a rate slightly below the rate of inflation. A summary of responses to these assumptions is listed in Table 1.

When comparing the responses of those individuals from public institutions with those from private institutions, a statistically significant difference was determined for the item examining the expanded use of the computer as a management tool. Representatives from private colleges and universities agreed with the assumption much more strongly than did those from public institutions. No significant differences were determined for this group of assumptions when comparing the responses of housing officers from institutions of differing sizes (fewer than 2,000 capacity, 2001-4000 capacity, and over 4000 capacity).

The Impact on Business Officers

Mean scores of the respondents to the general assumptions regarding the impact on business officers at all levels tended to indicate agreement for all items, except one. The mean score of the housing officers for the item dealing with the delining pool of college graduates affecting an ability to attract new people into management was neutral (3.00). For all the other items the mean response indicated agreement. The items

dealing with facilities management with respect to energy costs and pressures to keep costs down elicited the most favorable mean scores. These responses are listed in Table 2.

No significant differences were determined either on the basis of institutional size or the public or private nature of the institution for any of the items considered by the respondents.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of this study. Most obviously, the business environment that was forecasted by NACUBO for the decade of the 1980's appears to be congruent with the current environment. The housing officers agreed with nearly all of the assumptions they considered. The only assumption with which they disagreed addressed the general question of federal aid. The respondents did not indicate that they thought federal student aid will continue to grow and that additional federal support will grow at a rate slightly below the inflation rate.

Trends that the housing officers tended to agree with most strongly would indicate a business environment of increased accountability, accelerated usage of management information systems, heightened pressure to keep costs from growing, and continued energy-related problems. On the other hand, the housing officers reported that enrollment will not be as much of a problem as was originally forecast, and that attracting competent people as business officers will not be a great problem.

Several recommendations for operating practices for housing officers can be drawn from this study. They include the following:

1. Devising ways to assure accountability to various constitutencies not only will be a challenge for housing officers, but will be necessary to insure confidence in them on the part of both internal and external constitutencies.

2. Developing management tools and automatic data processing techniques will assist in keeping business procedures current with present technology.

3. Being asked to provide more services at lower costs will be a challenge that housing officers should be prepared to face through the balance of the decade.

TABLE 1

ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE 1980'S BY HOUSING OFFICERS ON THE GENERAL EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Item	Mean Score[1]
1. Inflation will be at a rate of 6-10% per year.	3.905
2. Continuing stress of higher education due to the leveling of the decline in enrollment and the difficulty in obtaining financial support. Federal student aid will continue to grow. Additional federal support will be received at a rate slightly below that of inflation.	2.571
3. Enrollment will decline less than the 25% predicted.	3.571
4. Less than 100 institutions will close.	3.143
5. There will be a continuing need to respond to pressures related to societal issues in terms of affirmative action, consumerism, handicapped, safety, energy, pollution, and the changes in the mandatory retirement age.	3.905
6. A continuing problem to cope with the federal government related to the enactment, administration, and interpretation of new laws and regulations.	4.095
7. The increasing costs and unavailability of energy will be a major problem.	4.190
8. An interest in efforts to develop indicators to assess the financial health of institutions.	4.000
9. A continuing pressure for improved accountability by state and federal government.	4.286
10. A continuing pressure to develop better financial management tools for analysis, costing, budget, and reporting, both internal and external.	4.476
11. Expanded use of the computer as an analytical management tool.	4.524
12. Tuition will continue to rise at a rate faster than inflation, state appropriations will rise at roughly the level of inflation, on the average; some institutions with lower enrollments will not maintain growth of appropriations.	3.667
13. Increasing encroachment on public institutions by their funding authorities.	3.952
14. More pressure from FASB and federal government for consistent and uniform reporting practices.	3.667
15. Deferring maintenance will continue, with the resulting backlog becoming a serious financial problem to institutions and a drain on the institutional vitality.	4.238

TABLE 1 (CON'D)

16. Tenure will continue. Selection of faculty, however, will be a much more careful process. There will be an increasing emphasis in improvement of the competence of all personnel, particularly in the management area.	4.143

[1] 1= Strong disagree
2= Disagree
3= Neither agree nor disagree
4= Agree
5= Strongly agree

TABLE 2

ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE 1980'S BY HOUSING OFFICERS ON THE IMPACT OF THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ON BUSINESS OFFICERS AT ALL LEVELS

Item	Mean Score[1]
1. Increasing importance of the role of the chief business officer.	4.095
2. There will be more pressure and need for more technical staff.	4.048
3. Business officers will have broader responsibilities. If they are not capable of performing they will be replaced or their responsibilities limited.	3.667
4. Management and leadership development for both top management and middle management will be given increasing emphasis. Use of external groups such as AMA should be explored.	3.714
5. All business areas will be under increasing pressures to keep their costs down, and this may require reduction of services at the same time services must be increased.	4.381
6. As a labor intensive industry, we must still look for all ways to substitute capital for labor; word processing and the use of mini-computers will be increasingly used as a substitute for adding personnel.	4.238
7. By the late 1980's, the pool of college graduates will be declining and this will affect our ability to attract new people into management.	3.000
8. The next ten years will be a period of heavy replacement of senior personnel as a whole generation that came into the college scene in 1946 (particularly from 1946 to 1956) will be rapidly phasing out, especially in the period from 1980 to 1985, and will be replaced by a younger generation with more sophisticated training in the most modern management tools.	3.857
9. Personnel management will become an even more important function.	4.048
10. Facilities management, especially with rising energy costs, will be critical.	4.571

[1] 1= Strongly disagree
2= Disagree
3= Neither agree nor disagree
4= Agree
5= Strongly agree

Appendix A

Participants in the Study

Robert Barlow
Sweet Briar College

Susan Bowling
Stephens College

Gayle Buckley
Seattle Pacific University

Edna Calhoun
Howard University

Alan Davis
Tulane University

William Kingston
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Patrick Lattore
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Nancy Murphy-Chadwick
Texas Women's University

Paul Oliaro
University of Vermont

Seth Patton
Denison University

Sherrill Ragans
Florida State University

Harold Redd
Brigham Young University

Lois Redd
Montclair State College

Edward Scoles
Stanford University

Margaret Seifert
Hanover College

Carolyn Smith
Hofstra University

Lyle Thorburn
Michigan State University

Douglas Zatechka
University of Nebraska-Lincoln